



Fuel Management Prescription for the RDN Arboretum which supports the July 21, 2020 FireSmart Assessment, completed by the City of Nanaimo.

## **BACKGROUND**

### Community Wildfire Resiliency Plans

From 2004 to 2011, the RDN utilized the Strategic Wildfire Prevention Initiative (SWPI) program funding to create initial CWPPs for the communities within its jurisdiction. CWPPs are recommended to be updated every five years as the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) fire risk changes with expanded development, changes to forest health, fuel hazards and alterations to existing infrastructure. Current and acceptable plans are also a requirement in order to qualify for the CRI program. Funding and support provided through this program is intended to reduce wildfire risks and impacts by completing FireSmart initiatives that support the seven FireSmart disciplines.

The new CWRP templates focus on the seven FireSmart disciplines and identify issues within each section of the plan to provide a comprehensive description of the action to mitigate or manage the risk. The detailed description ensures that the plan is understood and what mitigating actions will do to reduce or manage the risk. The CWRPs are strongly linked to the CRI funding program. They are expected to guide the RDN with recommended priorities to serve as a basis to secure subsequent grants that will allow for a longer-term, sustainable program with the CWRPs providing the identification of FireSmart priorities, as well as opportunities for increasing community resiliency.

The seven FireSmart disciplines represent different aspects of wildfire preparedness, management, response, prevention, mitigation and resiliency. The seven disciplines include: education, legislation and planning, development considerations, interagency cooperation, cross training, emergency planning and vegetation management.

While the project to update the CWPPs was on hold, the RDN implemented initiatives that focused on the education, cross-training, interagency cooperation and vegetation management FireSmart disciplines. As a result, the RDN was the successful applicant of a grant for \$47,390 in 2019 to host a Local FireSmart Representative Workshop which certified 33 new Local FireSmart Representatives, FireSmart Community Champion Workshops, a FireSmart Community Event and to provide FireSmart home and community assessments which included vegetation management events.

### Fuel Management Prescriptions

The 707 Community Park is 422 hectares, not including trail corridors located on undeveloped road. The Fuel Management Prescription will focus on approximately one third (141 ha) of the park in areas abutting residential properties, near trails and where sleeping and sheltering in public places has occurred. The Fuel Management Prescription is a document that describes the wildfire risk and the recommended fuel management activities in an identified area that will reduce fire behaviour attributes. Prescriptions must be completed by Registered Professional Foresters (RPFs) that are accredited with the Association of BC Forest Professionals (ABC FP) and need to consider the balance between potential fire behaviour implications, resource and conservation values. Recommended fuel treatments are generally located within the 2-kilometer Wildland Urban Interface and can focus on vertical and horizontal fuels, fire weather

components, topography and values at risk taking into consideration land management objectives such as retaining the forest canopy.

The Arboretum is a 26-hectare property owned by the RDN Solid Waste services and has recently received a FireSmart assessment by Nanaimo Fire Rescue with recommendations for general FireSmart practices that would lessen the wildfire hazard. Adding a Fuel Management Prescription for this site as part of the overall project would provide specific recommended actions for long term wildfire mitigation.

RDN Emergency Services liaised with BC Wildfire who have recommended the 707 Community Park for a Fuel Management Prescription as initial attack crews conduct fuels management activities in coordination with the RDN and Gabriola Fire Department at this site annually. The Fuels Management Prescription will guide the initial attack crews to specific fuel treatment areas. Collaborating with BCWS on this project will reduce costs associated with recommended fuel treatment activities. BCWS has also expressed support to conduct a site visit of the Arboretum and potentially assist the RDN with any recommended fuel treatments.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

1. That the Board endorse the application to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities for Community Resiliency Investment funding to:
  - a. Develop Community Wildfire Resiliency Plans for each Electoral Area
  - b. Fuel Management Prescriptions for the 707 Community Park
  - c. Fuel Management Prescriptions for the Regional District of Nanaimo Arboretum Property.
2. That alternate direction be provided.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The CRI 2021 FireSmart Community Funding and Support program provides 100% of the cost of eligible activities to a maximum of \$50,000 per Electoral Area for FireSmart activities only and an additional \$50,000 base funding for the RDN. The CWRPs for each Electoral Area, temporary CWRP Coordinator and Fuel Management Prescriptions will be entirely grant funded. There is \$400,000 in total grant funds available for this funding stream.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS**

People and Partnerships - Seek opportunities to partner with the provincial and federal governments, other government agencies, and community stakeholder groups in order to advance strategic plan goals and objectives.



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August 24, 2020

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